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DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: PREL SOCI SU ER
SUBJECT: PEACEBUILDING WORKSHOPS GAINING MOMENTUM

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Peacebuilding Center for the Horn of Africa (PCHA) hosted its third Embassy-sponsored workshop for eastern Sudanese participants during the week of June 21-27. The week-long workshop included lively presentations, discussions, simulations, and lectures. The most recent workshop hosted 40 participants, 10 more than initially budgeted. The workshop is one in a five-part series, each workshop focusing on different aspects of building a system of government in Sudan. The workshop series, which has been highly lauded by Eritrean and Sudanese officials, continues to grow in size and popularity as more and more applicants vie for limited slots. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The PCHA is an Asmara-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) that runs a variety of programs focused on promoting peace and sustainability in the Horn of Africa region, particularly in Sudan. Embassy Asmara has provided the PCHA with \$150,000, funded by an ESF grant, to conduct five, week-long workshops focused on familiarizing eastern Sudanese NGOs with the process of promoting peace, civil society, and democracy. Although the initial workshop met with complications (a dozen unmarried female participants were barred by Sudanese authorities from leaving Sudan to attend the workshop), the workshops have since been filled to capacity and flooded with applications.

¶3. (U) Each seven-day workshop is divided into three-hour lectures and discussions, with guest presenters scattered throughout. PolOff attended a portion of the most recent workshop, themed "Preparation and Participation in General Elections," and found the participants engaged in a lively discussion on defining the social responsibility of Sudanese and international organizations in the peace building process. The discussion took place just after a presentation from the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and was followed by rounds of in-depth conversation during the dinner break.

¶4. (U) Several articles have appeared about the workshops in Sudanese newspapers. The workshops have even become a talking point for the Eritrean government; Abdullah Jaber, the ruling party's Director of Organizational Affairs with a special emphasis on Eritrean-Sudanese relations, regularly praises the PCHA's efforts and uses his clout to support the USG-funded workshops. The PCHA is already fielding phone calls from varying Sudanese factions all wanting to reserve slots for the upcoming fourth workshop, themed "Election Techniques and Strategies," which is scheduled to be held in late August. Although the workshop guidelines stipulate that participants can only attend one workshop, the PCHA is

creating a sixth workshop for the "best of the best" participants from the first five workshops.

¶ 15. (SBU) The PCHA is led by Dr. Taisier M. Ali, who also founded the organization. Ali is perhaps one of the most well-respected non-Eritreans living in Asmara. His counsel is sought by not only Abdullah Jaber, but also high-ranking officials of the Asmara-based Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) as well as Sudanese and GOSS officials. Ali remains adamant that the work being done by the PCHA is "merely a drop in the bucket," in terms of promoting the needed stability in Sudan. However, he believes the USG's support for the PCHA's peace-building efforts are nonetheless needed and important.

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